

Society Key in Inmate's Release

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“Without a good re-entry system, offenders being released will commit a new crime. We are creating a re-entry accountability plan for every offender.”

J. David Donahue,
Commissioner

Of every 10 offenders released from an Indiana prison sentence, only four are likely to return to prison within the first three years, according to J. David Donahue, commissioner of the Indiana Department of Correction.

Donahue was in Kokomo on Tuesday to conduct a town hall meeting attended by officials and staff from the Miami Correctional Facility and Howard County Community Corrections and local officials.

The Indiana DOC releases an average of 16,500 offenders per year or 63 prisoners a day to local communities, he said.

“We can keep arresting folks and locking people up,” Donahue said. “Four out of 10 will return to prison within 36 months, that is probably the best we can do. The national average is 54 percent of released inmates return to prison in 36 months.”

Donahue said if the rate can be reduced by five percent per year that would be a savings of \$80 million per year in the DOC's \$1.2 billion two-year budget.

“That is \$80 million that can be used for education or to improve the state parks,” he said. “I don't want the DOC to be the biggest state agency, like in California.”

Donahue said California is 200 percent over capacity in its prison capacity and Indiana is leasing 1,260

beds in Henry County to California. He said that will create 200 jobs in Indiana and bring in \$6.2 million to the state.

The DOC is focusing on the re-entry of ex-offenders back into their home community. Donahue said the state opened the first re-entry facility in Plainfield with the assistance of several state agencies.

“Without a good re-entry system, offenders being released will commit a new crime,” he said. “We are creating a re-entry accountability plan for every offender.”

The three keys to the transition back into the community are employment, housing and transportation.

“If you left here with no job, no home and no car, would you know where to go to get help?” Donahue asked those in attendance. “That’s what an offender faces.”

Donahue said the DOC has to make potential employers aware of what an offender is capable of doing when they leave the prison system.

“There is a better risk of hiring an ex-offender,” he said. “You know a lot about that person.”

Donahue said without employment opportunities, the ex-offender has no housing opportunities.

“There are some housing authorities that won’t rent to an ex-offender,” he said.

Donahue said the DOC is partnering with some faith based organizations to provide transportation for ex-offenders to get back and forth to work.

Miami County Correctional Facility provides jobs for 590 Howard County residents and employment for 80 Cass County workers, he said.

Donahue said there are 318 adult offenders and 15 juveniles from Howard County in the DOC.

“The primary cause of the crime is substance abuse,” he said.

Donahue said 97 percent of the inmates will eventually be released to their home county as required by law.

“Community corrections is the answer,” he said. “Community corrections is good for the families and offender. I don’t want to build any new prisons.”

About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.

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